



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 109th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, MAY 24, 2005

House of Representatives

BORDER POWER PLANTS MUST MEET U.S. AIR QUALITY STANDARDS!

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Chairman, I understand the point of order, and I appreciate the advice he gave me yesterday, and I will just take a few minutes today to make some important points regarding our border communities.

This should be a simple and common-sense amendment to protect the air quality in border States without adding or subtracting appropriations from a single account in this bill. The amendment simply requires that power plants in northern Mexico that want to transmit electricity into the United States must meet U.S. air quality standards. Pretty simple.

Many communities in border States, including many in my district (I represent the whole California-Mexico border) are literally under siege from air and water pollution from northern Mexico. Companies that wish to avoid American environmental regulations, but want to meet our energy needs in California and other southwestern States, are building power plants in

Mexico directly across the border from American communities. Yet many of these power plants do not have to meet any of the American regulations, even though they are in the same air basins as towns on the U.S. side of the border.

For example, companies that recently built power plants in Mexicali, which is right across the border from the Imperial County of California that I represent, have not funded any road paving projects and other clean air efforts that would be required to offset their pollution if they were a mere 3 miles to the north. In a place like Imperial County, which is plagued by the highest childhood asthma rates in the Nation, and limited public resources, these offset projects are needed to mitigate the public health problems that are worsened by the power plants.

While the Mexicali plants have largely brought their emissions into compliance in response to this Congress' pressure, they have refused to pay for any mitigation projects. The Department of Energy, which acknowledges that Imperial Valley is in the same geographical air

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basin as the power plants in Mexico, have turned their backs on the residents of Southern California and approved the permits without requiring the companies to pave the dusty dirt roads or implement other clean air projects that would offset their pollution. The Department had the information and opportunity; but apparently did not feel obligated to fully protect clean air in Imperial County.

I believe the Department should be obligated to require offsets because there are a dozen more power plants in northern Mexico on line right now. These power plants are now under no obligation to meet any U.S. standards despite sharing air basins with American communities.

My amendment does not interfere with the Mexican Government's right to regulate pollution; instead, it prohibits the Department of Energy from using funds in this bill to issue permits for the transmission of electricity into the U.S.

I urge adoption of this important clean air amendment.

Mr. Chairman, I would just say that I understand the point of order, and I appreciate the gentleman's advice and I hope he will stay interested in this topic.

Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to withdraw the amendment.